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TWO WAYS
and other Stories

ROY L. HILL

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TWO WAYS
and
other
Stories

BY

Roy L. Hill

1959

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To

the memory of

my late friend and teacher

Dorothy Speare

Foreward

Roy L. Hill, author of TWO WAYS, achieved recognition in the literary world by having his poem accepted for publication in the National Anthology of Poetry. At that time, he was on the faculty of Grambling College, Grambling, Louisiana, and was attached to the English Department. Another poem SAD PEOPLE, was selected for inclusion in a forthcoming publication sponsored by the National Poetry Association. However, Mr. Hill's talent is most pronounced in the short story field, and this collection of stories is evidence of the ability of this skilled writer.

Hill was born in Laurens, South Carolina, son of the late Mr. and Mrs. Clarence B. Hill. Both his parents died when he was two months old. The history of this author, especially when his early handicaps are appreciated, has seldom been equaled for dramatic accomplishment in the face of hardships, and barriers.

After the death of his parents, Roy was sent to Pennsylvania, where he spent his early years in the household of a family of Quakers. Evidently, his early association with the Society of Friends failed to influence his desire to serve his country in time of conflict, for he enlisted in the United States Navy shortly after the outbreak of World War II and served for three years and a half as a yeoman.

Upon his discharge from the Navy, Hill entered Kansas State College at Manhattan, Kansas. Desirous of continuing his studies in his native South, he transferred to North Carolina Agricultural and Technical College in Greensboro, North Carolina, where he received his B.S. degree. He was awarded the M.S.J. degree by the School of Public Relations and Communications, Boston University. While studying at Boston, he was referred to as a "gifted young writer" by Dorothy Speare, Hollywood scenario writer and novelist. In June of 1958 he received his M.A. degree from Michigan State University, and at the present time is a candidate for the Ph.D. degree at Pennsylvania State University, and is attached to the Department of Speech as a graduate assistant at that institution. Other schools at which Mr. Hill has taught are Southern University, Baton Rouge, Louisiana; Fort Valley State College, Fort Valley, Georgia; and Michigan State University, Lansing, Michigan. He has also been a visiting Professor of English at: Alcorn A. and M. College, Lorman, Mississippi, Texas College, Tyler, Texas and Johnson C. Smith University, Charlotte, North Carolina.

Hill admits that from his early childhood he "suffered from an intense desire to communicate," and his TWO WAYS and other

stories are the result of a sustained effort to master the technique of the short story. He received valuable guidance in creative writing from Morgan Blum at the University of Minnesota, and his experience as a staff member of newspapers in various sections of the country has been of great practical help. One of his main objectives in writing this book is to inspire other authors to portray life as it exists, instead of exhausting their talent on unconvincing fictional plots.

The author feels indebted to Dr. Leslie Pinckney Hill and his wife the late Jane Clark Hill of Cheyney State Teachers College, Cheyney, Pennsylvania, Mrs. Rosa Nicholson-Weaver, Bettis Academy, Trenton, South Carolina and to Dr. E. Ray Speare of Boston University for their encouragement and assistance; and he is grateful to many others who have furthered his literary ambitions, including Dr. Speare's daughter, who has supervised some of his literary projects. It is with affection that Hill remembers his aunt, Mrs. Corrie J. Carroll of Laurens, South Carolina, who inspired him and taught him the fundamentals of dramatic construction. "Always watch people," she advised. "You like to look at them, don't you? Observe them carefully, and your life will be enriched."

Hill is married to Patricia A. Taylor of Los Angeles, is a member of Kappa Alpha Psi and Phi Delta Kappa fraternities. Although his activities as teacher, student, philosopher and traveler consume a large segment of his potential productivity, he is presently constructing a serious novel and has completed the framework for another.

Horace Greeley Dawson, Jr.
State University of Iowa
Iowa City, Iowa
January 1, 1959

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Book by the same author

WHO'S WHO IN THE AMERICAN-NEGRO PRESS

Self Portrait in a Nutshell

The stillness of the lazy South Carolina day was broken by the frail waa-waa of a new pickaninny. The pickaninny's father had been anticipating the event. The first thing he said was, "I hope it's a boy. I've got a good name picked out for him."

Mr. Hill had selected the name of Leeuwenhoek for his son. The name was changed without Mr. Hill's consent because the local populace rebelled at the effort it required to pronounce it. Several substitute names were suggested by friends and neighbors. After a considerable amount of heated debate, the name of Roy was finally chosen. Roy was easy to pronounce and, moreover, a few of the better educated citizens were able to spell it if you gave them a little time.

My wailing gradually became less continuous, the hair on my head grew knottier, my lips thicker, and the appetite for my big toe bigger. I gradually became greatly interested in my immediate surroundings. Mother thought I was too interested when she discovered that I was using her lard pail as a fishing pond. She conked me on my butt-head with a pot stick because, as she pointed out, crockery was none too plentiful in our area.

I seemed to have a penchant for getting into things that were none of my business. As a solution to the problem of what to do with that "ornery youngun" to keep him out of mischief during the day, I was hustled off to the village to matriculate at kindergarten.

How vivid are the memories of those golden days! Eating my lunch on the way to school, and then trying to eat everyone else's; losing my shoes, my hat; pulling the hair of the little girl who sat right in front of me and, I'm afraid, being responsible for many a nightmare that my teacher suffered.

But school was educational, too. For one thing, I learned to hold hands with the girls, and I developed a technique that I have never been able to improve to this day.

In the years following, and they seemed to follow fast, I somehow managed to get through grammar and high school. I became more serious regarding my outlook on life. I wondered why I had been placed here, in this wonderful land that we call America. I speculated on where its civilization was leading us and what part I was destined to play in it. I also acquired a desire for cocoanut cake and good music.

When war was declared, I left my books and went off to try to discover the meaning of life and death. The earth whirled around in space, carrying me along without me being conscious of it. I

was determined to learn the significance of life. But before I could make a serious approach to the question, I was in an auditorium with a thousand other guys listening to some dope discussing and cussing the faults of Navy cruises.

The pants that were issued to me were so tight that I was afraid I couldn't get them on. They were beautiful pants, though, and I worked and worked until my efforts were finally crowned with success.

During the period of the bursting bombs, sinking ships, flaming planes, exploding shells, agonizing cries of wounded and dying soldiers and sailors, I did my part; I am proud to say that I helped to bring World War II to its successful completion. Yes, I did my part in a training camp a thousand miles from the sea. I was a sailor and obeyed every order without question or complaint. Beating out a rhythm on the keyboard of a standard typewriter was my task. Oh, yes, I did it with all my strength and courage.

College came next and I learned very fast. The knowledge I accumulated was valuable. One problem in particular remains in my memory because the solution of it demonstrates the value of a college education. The equation took Shakespeare and mixed hydrogen with the social problems of the French during the Spanish Civil War, added ten volts, and treated with the means of the extremes the number of calories required to construct a church choir, gathered ten grams of butterfat from a dozen eggs, multiplied by the sound of a masculine verb, gave it to Madam Curie and she dried it on an African desert. From that day to this, we've had the quadratic formula, at least, that is what they told me.

I am leaving Madam Curie to you. I have to live some more so I can continue this autobiography.

Two Ways

During World War II I was assigned to the Receiving Station at Dawson Annex, Virginia. I had attained the rating of yeoman, and my duties were limited to the Personnel Office of Barracks Nine. I soon learned that while a war was being waged overseas, a vicious conflict of an entirely different nature was being fought on our own soil – a battle of stupidity, without rational motivation and without end.

The Negro sailors at the Receiving Station were segregated. We stood in a designated line to get our poorly prepared chow, and if we wanted to eat, we were forced to carry the food behind a partition marked: COLORED. No preference was given to the Negroes of the French Navy; they found conditions so unendurable that they slept on their ships.

Barracks Nine was designed to accommodate 300 men; more than 600 occupied it. It was impossible to walk along the halls with any degree of comfort because cots were strewn all over the floor. When crowded conditions reached the saturation point, some of the men slept in the bathroom.

Our recreation hours were of a theoretical nature. The movie hall, which seated about 5,000 men, had only 75 seats reserved for Negro personnel. Colored sailors were permitted to attend the first show, but were excluded from the second performance. When a colored sailor made a purchase in the canteen, he was not allowed to remain there; he returned to Barracks Nine, where his presence would not offend any of his white brothers.

Although the Negro sailors worked extremely hard, it was their chore to pick up trash and cigarette butts when their duties were finished. This task occupied the hours until nightfall, after which they did their own washing. There was no limitation to the number of uniforms a white sailor could send to the base's laundry room, but only one set of uniforms per week was accepted from a Negro.

Naturally, these conditions created resentment among the colored sailors. Captain Paul Johnson became aware of the tension and informed me that the Navy Department was sending an officer to work with the Negro personnel.

"But I don't see much point to it," he said. "Don't you think our boys are treated better here than at any of the other bases?"

I made a noncommittal answer; he was a Southern white man with a rigid viewpoint on racial questions; I did not wish to irritate him.

The officer, Lieutenant Commander Alsop, arrived the following day and was escorted to Barracks Nine by a messenger from the captain's office. Commander Alsop was a balding man in his late thirties, a solid slab of a man who was husky without being fat.

"Are you Hill?" he demanded.

"Yes, sir," I replied.

"Do you know anything about the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People?"

When I informed him that I was a member, he told me that the Association had reported the outrageous conditions at Dawson Annex to the Navy officials, and that was why he had been sent her.

"Where are you from, sir?" I asked.

"I come from Manhattan, Kansas," he said, "but that isn't important. It doesn't make any difference where a man comes from as long as he has some humanity in his heart."

Commander Alsop's arrival gave new hope to the personnel. With a Northerner in charge of the barracks, there was a prospect of receiving better treatment, and the men reported to their details in moderately good spirits. However, they did not unbend to the point of smiling at their new commander; they had been tricked before and they were waiting for this officer to prove himself.

He began going to the details with them, for the purpose of learning why they always appeared ready to fight. One day he came into my office and said, "What's wrong with those fellows? They go around with chips on their shoulders like they're looking for trouble."

"In my opinion, sir, it would be a good idea to call a meeting and thrash the whole thing out," I replied.

Commander Alsop adopted my suggestion and called a meeting for the next morning. I received an order pertaining to the working parties, but the commander objected to the men going out until after the meeting was held. When Captain Johnson heard that the men had not gone to work, he paid me a personal visit.

"What's going on in Tinderbox Barracks Nine?" he demanded.

I told him that Commander Alsop was having a talk with the crew.

"Tell him to get those men out to their details," he ordered, "and have him stop that damned talking until night."

After the commander sent the men to work, he came into the office. Captain Johnson glared at him and said, "You Northern whites don't know anything about the Negro problem in the South. This is Dawson Annex, Virginia, and don't you forget it. You haven't been sent down here to put ideas into these darkies' heads. Don't let it happen again!"

"Yes, sir."

"And another thing, Commander. Don't forget that *I'm* running this base."

The friction erupted into open warfare that same evening. I had been asleep for perhaps half an hour when I heard a commotion on the top deck. I knew at once it was serious from the shouts of "sons of bitches" and other epithets which were being exchanged without restraint.

Trouble had started when a white and a colored sailor had met at the water fountain on the top deck of Barracks Nine. The top deck was reserved for whites. The white sailor had ordered the Negro to go downstairs and, when the Negro had stood his ground, the white sailor struck him. Within a matter of seconds, a number of white seamen in the top wing appeared, and in an equally short time were confronted by the colored sailors, who rushed the top deck.

When I arrived on the scene, a free-for-all was in progress. The barracks room was semi-dark, but the violence and profanity seemed to give it a special kind of illumination. Finally I found the light switch, snapped it on and called for aid. Some of the white fellows from the other barracks came over and helped me stop the fighting.

"All you boys who want to fight ought to be shipped to the Pacific," I told them. "There's no sense to this sort of thing. You've got fifteen barracks full of white sailors to lick. Where are you going to get the stuff to fight them with? Don't you know it will have to come from the white man?"

"Shut your God damned big mouth," a rough-looking colored fellow shouted. "You don't know what it means to be called names and driven around like slaves in this God damned white man's navy. You're just a good old 'Uncle Tom' and if I ever catch you downtown, I'll slit your throat. I hate your guts. You're always throwing your pearly teeth up in some Mr. Charlie's face."

Incidentally, Negroes called white people whom they disliked "Mr. Charlie" but I was too busy at the moment to concern myself about it. I called the officer who was in charge of Barracks Nine and told him what had happened. He came over to the barracks and tried to look important. I was disgusted with him until I learned, a short time later, that he had just returned from overseas and was too nervous to act with assurance.

Most of the white sailors who had been engaged in the fight reported to Sick Bay in the morning. Commander Alsop launched an investigation, but he was unable to get much enlightenment because the injured persons could not identify their assailants. The commander partially solved the problem of punishment by not permitting the sailors to go ashore for a week. Additional discipline was admin-

istered by the white petty officers, who mustered the six hundred colored sailors and assigned two hundred to pull cables, a hundred and fifty to cut grass, a hundred and fifty to work in the Commissary, fifty to clean the recreation halls, twenty-five to the galley, five to the captain's quarters, and twenty to the officers' mess. The white sailors were not punished.

This discipline worked until one morning when the base was hit by a torrential rain storm. A sailor came to the office and said, "It's raining down tadpoles outside this morning. Reckon we'll have to pull cables today?"

The reason the men didn't want to work in the rain was that they didn't have any foul-weather gear. Commander Alsop called the captain and suggested that the working parties be called off for that day. I could hear the captain's biting voice coming over the telephone: "Get those darkies out on the working parties. They're used to working in the rain."

Commander Alsop looked grim. "Men," he told them, "I called the captain and tried to get him to cancel the working parties, but he refused to do it. Get your gangs and shove off."

When the work parties returned that evening, the commander called another meeting. But the men were in bad humor because they felt that it was partly his fault that they had been forced to work in the rain; they did not care to talk to a man who called himself their friend, and yet was powerless to help them. He looked wan when he came into my office.

"I've never failed so miserably before," he told me.

I spoke to some of the men about the commander and told them he was definitely on their side, but I was unable to convince them. They took the attitude that Commander Alsop was either indifferent to their problems, or did not have sufficient influence to be of value. In either case, he was not the friend they needed.

One aspect of the situation caused me a considerable amount of worry. The surliness of the men justified, to an extent at least, the contention that the Negroes, as a race, behaved childishly. Actually, the men had been imposed upon to such a degree that they were unable to view matters objectively. Their point of view was expressed by one of the colored sailors who stopped me in the hall outside of my office.

"We'd like to cooperate," he told me, "but these white people are working us like dogs. The white sailors lie in the sun all day, go swimming, play ping-pong, go skating, and have a dance every Friday night. We don't have anything. We don't get any rest unless we can get into Sick Bay, and they'd put us in the brig if we sat down on those damned details."

I reported this conversation to Commander Alsop, and he thought I should ask the captain for an interview. I told the captain that a committee of six men wanted to see him.

"What for?" he asked.

"They want to find out, sir, if you'll give them a break," I answered.

"I shouldn't admit it, Hill," he said, "but I'm prejudiced. I don't want any part of a meeting with those trouble-makers."

The only thing left for Commander Alsop was to call on Commander Bandfield, who was our Regimental Commander. He told Commander Bandfield that the captain had refused to listen to the grievances of the colored personnel, and he had come to the Regimental Commander as a last resort. Commander Bandfield agreed to hear the story, and every man in the barracks began to hope that a change for the better was in the offing.

In choosing the committee, I selected six sailors who had attended law school. They were fairly optimistic when I marched them to the Regimental Commander's office, but when he said, "Come in, boys," I knew and they knew that their cause hopeless. This man was doubtlessly a Southerner, for in the South a colored man is a boy until he's nearly sixty, then he becomes Uncle; a girl is called by her first name until she attains middle age, after which she becomes Auntie. To make matters worse, Commander Bandfield's yeoman said, "Sit down, boys."

They obeyed; but Louis Watson of Chicago, whom the captain classified as an uppity nigger, did not wait for the commander's permission to speak. Louis jumped to his feet and said, "Do you want to know why we're here? I'll tell you. We're required to go on general details, regardless of our rating. We have to work around the barracks after eight hours of crew labor. We're jim-crowed in the dining hall, movies and canteen, and we have no recreational facilities. Now tell me, if you please, who wouldn't raise all the hell possible under such conditions?"

Watson was not finished. He paused to take a breath, and Commander Bandfield took that opportunity to cut short the interview.

"That's all," he said. "You may go."

The men drifted out in silence. A short time later, Captain Johnson sent for me.

"I'm going to transfer all the colored personnel away from here," he said. "If that meddling Northerner had stayed where he belonged, I wouldn't have to do this."

I murmured something that was intended to be courteous.

"Where would you like to go, Hill?" he asked. "I'm not going to transfer you overseas. I want you to live, and overseas duty might be too dangerous."

"Captain, why must I live?" I replied. "I'm no better than any of those other colored sailors."

"Maybe you're not any better, but you're a lot different," he said thoughtfully. "I honestly believe that you will be of great service to mankind, and I don't want you to die before you have a chance to help your people. I'm sorry that you're colored because it will always be a double-handicap."

"A double-handicap?" I asked.

"Yes. To men like me, you will always be just a Negro, but you're not just an ordinary Negro, Hill, because your own people will never accept you as one of them. Alsop will go back to his home and I hope he stays out of the South. He is the type that starts the Southern darkies to thinking."

It was true that Commander Alsop had failed to solve the problem. Captain Johnson solved it – to his own satisfaction – by shipping the men to the West Coast and to the South Pacific. Was the Northern white man's solution correct, or was the Southern white man's solution the only one?

I wish I knew the answer.

Poor Man's Opera

The lights dim; the music turns erotic; the air is taut with sustained tension. Then suddenly the ominous thump of a fallen body breaks the illusion. The lights grow brighter, and one sees the form of a man sheepishly climbing back into his theatre box, and another spectator shows what happens when one leans too far out to see what goes on upon the darkened stage of the *Old Howard.*

Why is there such avid interest on the part of spectators? Why do some people return several times a week to see the same show? How does the Old Howard compare and contrast with the Metropolitan Opera House?

Would you like to go along with this reporter to find some of the answers? Then let's go down to Scollay Square and take a look at one of Boston's most famous Theatrical landmarks. Stop a moment outside the sagging structure on Howard Street, fifty yards from the Scollay Square subway entrance. The soot-stains of the wrinkled brickway facade seem to be the personification of a loosely corseted old harridan. The whole front seems to be leaning for support on the iron bars that are wrapped like bailing wire around its second story. It could have been a church, a lodge hall, or just a tumble-down loft structure – the kind that clutters up most of Boston's North End. Yes, at one time it was a church, but it's a "burly" show now, probably the best known in the world.

The Old Howard's Rabelaisian burlesque is more spicy than that in any other major American city, yet Boston is the place where the popular and uncensored indoor pastime could be properly termed the poor man's opera. The pattern followed by the Old Howard's program involves usually one or two comedians with accompanying straight men or stooges, a chorus line, vocalist or novelty acts, and, of course, the perennial strip-teasers (a name which incidentally has been given a spot in the new revised edition of Webster's Collegiate Dictionary).

Now it wouldn't be too uninteresting to discuss the talents of these undressing ladies, for this profession not only includes the acts of women divesting themselves of their clothes for the entertainment of a predominantly male audience; it's more than that. It's the crowd on the streets, and the long and anxious line that ends at the ticket office. It's the sensual lips, the painted smiles, and tired, anxious eyes. It's the pulsing beat of the bass drum, the long-drawn out wail of the trumpet, and the mournful cry of the saxophone. It's the constant chatter of the concessionaires and the promising babble of the barker.

Yes, the barker promises a lot on the inside, and the feature performers, the strippers themselves, are in most cases just as provocative as their publicity claims. You'll see blondes, brunettes, and redheads – long of limb, heavy of breast, lean of waist. You'll see the chorus girls as an undulating backdrop for the peelers, chorines with lean, muscular limbs, tired angular faces – faces showing life's laughing anxiety and often the misery and poverty of five-dollar-a-night call girls.

But in all its tinsel glamor and tawdry show, the burlesque is a national institution, as democratic as Yankee Stadium, as American as the bowling alley around the corner, frowned on by a few, loved by many.

The attendance, although predominantly male, is often made up of a percentage of the opposite sex. These women can be broken into three groups: those out for a fling with their boy friends; pickups; and lesbians. The second group is interested in the audience and, needless to say, the third group is interested in the performers.

But all the audience isn't made up of only adult males and females. The age limit is generally displayed on the placard above the ticket booth in words that read "under 18 – not allowed," but in reality the age limit is based upon the customer's ability to cough up the price of admission.

The twenty or thirty women in the audience don't all close their eyes either. One is asleep on her husband's shoulder; another is living the experience of the strip-teaser on the runway.

Regardless of the number of young men in the crowd, the front row is usually occupied by old men, although this may not be true at every performance. It does seem true, however, that the gray, bald, and broad-beamed men make up a great percentage of the burlesque audience up front. Burlesque for the older man presents a way of clinging to a fading youth. For the young men, it is an escape from poverty or unsatisfied desires. To the youth it is a growing-up, a retreat from the demands of continence necessary in an adolescent society. Yes, the haven of the burlesque show has a great cross section of America in its audience. It is there that men can forget the cares, the toil of a long day, they can relax and enjoy themselves without the least heed of formality.

A new world opens up to these people when the strippers begin to slither out of their wispy gowns in rhythm with the slow, languid, sensuous music which accompanies their tantalizing bumps, grinds, and mammary undulations. Then the spectator becomes caught up in the spirit of an ancient form of entertainment that dates back to the Dance of the Seven Veils – the dance that may have been wit-

nessed by kings and commoners in the ancient cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. The howls blending with pounding of feet and clapping of hands literally turn the place into a bedlam, and yet upon seeing such a spectacle one finds less evil existing there than is generally believed. Instead, the objective viewer finds himself applauding for what seems to be a Lily Pons, a Kirsten Flagstad, or a feminine Nijinsky.

The singers and dancers at the *Old Howard* may never be invited to tea by a resident of Beacon Hill, but the artists of burlesque are appreciated sufficiently by their own discerning opera critics, the poorer people who are the real patrons of their art.

Lady Luck Plays Cops and Robbers

Many a crook has been nabbed trying to spend marked money, but Roger Hillsdorf is probably the first thief in the annals of recorded larceny who was caught spending pink nickels. It happened this way:

Mayme Ploger smears lipstick on the nickels when she plays the music box in her cafe. That's so the music man will know those nickels were on the house. Mayme's cafe was robbed of forty dollars by a man wearing a mask.

A few days later, John Walsh, a local detective, was buying a package of cigarettes at his favorite counter when the man next to him ordered an expensive cigar. Staring to see who could afford fifty-cent stogies, the detective's eyes became glued to the change the man handed over the counter, among which were two very pink nickels. Walsh's nimble mind flashed back to Mayme Ploger and the juke box, and in a twinkling Hillsdorf was behind bars and Mayme had most of her nickels back.

"Just a lucky break," said Walsh. "I got a tough break," said Hillsdorf.

"Pure chance. One in a million," says the statistician.

Yet, both policeman and lawbreaker will readily admit that Lady Luck – chance – call it what you will, plays a large part in the apprehension of wrongdoers. Sometimes the oddest coincidences will trap a murderer when conventional methods have utterly failed. Take the celebrated Bodmin case which a Scotland Yard detective solved in dramatic fashion after the chance encounter with a small wisp of hair.

A girl had been found murdered in Bodmin, a town in England. The only clew to her assailant was a small wisp of hair clutched firmly in the dead girl's hand.

The neighborhood was scoured, suspects were rounded up and questioned, and most of the clews were followed to their logical ending – always a blind alley. The police were baffled, and the murderer was free, perhaps to strike again.

Then one day a member of the local police force, dressed in plain clothes, went into the barber shop near the station for a shave. The only chair was occupied, and the policeman sat down to wait his turn. He glanced casually at the client in the chair, wondering how much longer the barber would be with the haircut, when suddenly his mind began to work. Something about the man's hair seemed familiar – reminded him of the tiny strand taken from the

murdered girl's hand, and which he had carefully examined at the time.

Here was luck indeed, if his suspicions proved to be right. So the officer determined to ask a few questions. When the barber had finished and the man stepped down from the chair, the officer approached him and asked a few cautious questions. The answers proved very unsatisfactory, with the result that the suspect was taken to the police station, booked and subsequently brought to trial. He – Ollison was his name – was found guilty and hanged, confessing at the last moment.

But all cases of catching the culprit are not quite so grim. Let's go back to New York where a burglar lived on borrowed time after stealing an alarm clock. Willy Boucher, the culprit, is pretty mum these days – with nothing but time on his hands.

But the police will tell you that Boucher broke the window of a combination barber shop and jewelry store, making off with sundry pieces of jewelry and a German alarm clock valued at fifteen dollars.

A few minutes after the dastardly deed, as he strolled down the avenue, there came a buzzing in his ears – a loud buzzing. It affected the ears of assorted residents of nearby domiciles who shouted copper.

A car and two radio patrolmen arrived, listened, and it seemed to them to be burglar alarm, but it wasn't coming from the looted premises.

In some confusion, the officers looked about and saw a man, with the trace of a weave, calmly ambling down the avenue.

It was Boucher, in whose pocket the alarm clock was doing its noisy duty; but later in the lineup, Boucher denied all.

"The police said I had an alarm clock and it was ringing," he told the judge. "I don't know anything about it. If I heard it ringing, I would have shut it off."

And so it goes. The lady called Luck has many disguises, although men engaged in the day-to-day business of tracking down murderers, hijackers, gangsters, smash-and-grab jewel thieves, burglars, confidence tricksters, forgers and counterfeiters don't, of course, rely altogether upon luck or chance to help them with their problems. However, they wouldn't be human if they didn't appreciate the breaks in their game.

Sometimes these breaks take the form of a tortured conscience. The murder of a postman in Georgia, which remained an unsolved mystery for three years, was cleared up recently through the chance cry of a woman while recovering from an anaesthetic. In her delirium,

she screamed, "I can no longer guard Jim Langston's secret." Jim Langston was the name of the murdered postman. Fortunately, the significance of the conscience-stricken cry was realized, and when the woman recovered she was cross-examined. She quickly broke down, signed a confession which implicated her father and a gang of men who had beaten the postman to death for giving away their bootlegging secrets.

Even spies have been caught by chance. Whether the sleuths of the Federal Bureau of Investigation would have caught up eventually with the spy ring headed by one Kurt Frederick Ludwig is a matter of conjecture. At any rate the F. B. I. got its first leads as the result of an accident whereby a taxicab driven by Sam Lichtman knocked down a spy at Seventh Avenue and Forty-fifth Street in New York. The spy, who died the next day, was Ulrich von der Osten, traveling under the alias of Julio Lopez. His papers went to the police and then to the Public Administrator who receives the property of intestate persons.

The local officials at once noticed the suspicious character of Mr. Lopez's effects, particularly some marginal notations which revealed a surprising technical knowledge and uncalled-for interest in magazine articles dealing with military aviation. The F. B. I. was informed and, by following persons who attended Mr. Lopez's unostentatious funeral and who telephoned his hotel, the agents soon found themselves hot on the trail of the alleged espionage plot.

The accidental uncovering of the scheme recalls the famous case in 1915 when the celebrated Dr. Heinrich F. Albert, later German Chancellor for a brief period, but then paymaster of a vast German espionage and propaganda plot in America, made the grievous mistake, unpardonable among spies, of falling asleep in the old Sixth Avenue elevated with his little black bag beside him. He awoke just in time to see a man disappear through the door with his bag, and a few days later "The New York World" began publishing the contents of Dr. Albert's mysterious portfolio. The results were startling. They revealed Albert to be a director of espionage operations involving such famous figures as Count von Bernstorff, Franz von Papen and Boy-Ed. German spies, the paper indicated, had been buying up newspapers, subsidizing labor leaders and purchasing munitions plants with the object of destroying them.

All of which might be said to prove the point so often made — that the best of sleuths depend ultimately on the one small break, the accidental discovery, to lead them to a crime's solution. Probably Mr. Lichtman won't get a medal for killing Von der Osten, but he should at least rank in the cabbies hall of fate, if not their hall

of fame, along with those other drivers who each year are commended by the police for helping to capture criminals.

A burglar who liked his chow – and plenty of it – found his appetite his undoing. Nicely dressed and with excellent luggage, he booked a room for a week in one of Atlantic City's better hotels. On the second day of his stay he reported sick and remained in bed. His meals were sent to his room.

Another guest in the hotel was a wealthy old lady with much jewelry and a sharp pair of eyes. She went to the manager.

"That man in number so-and-so," she said. "I don't believe he is ill at all. I've watched his meals go in, and he is eating enough for two."

A detective was sent for, and he hid himself on the landing outside the suspect's room. During dinner, when the upper floors were deserted, he saw the "sick" man slip out of his room and enter that of the old lady. The detective caught him in the act of opening the lady's jewel case, and searching his room found more than five thousand dollar's worth of stolen stuff.

He got five years and the short end of the "breaks."

A breach of etiquette recently trapped a Bronx thief. John Shumsky, a young boxer who said he had eked out his earnings of the last two years by committing a dozen robberies, found his extra-legal career at an end and when he managed to interfere with the social lives of his victims.

On the fateful night, Patrolman Del Gardo was walking along East Tremont Avenue, between Prospect and Mapes Avenues. As he passed Loft's candy store in the middle of the block, he raised his hand in an amiable salute, his usual gesture of goodwill, to John Purdy, the manager. It was now Purdy's turn to salute, and common courtesy demanded that he do so. But Purdy just stood there, staring woodenly in front of him. Del Gordo was suprised.

Continuing a few steps further, Del Gordo kept turning the thing over in his mind. He met a brother patrolman, August Koch. The two discussed the apparent snub, and decided that something must be troubling Purdy.

When they went back they found that something indeed was troubling the ordinarily friendly manager. It was a small but capable .25 caliber pistol, held against his back by Shumsky. Seeing the revolvers the two policemen carried, Shumsky dropped his little weapon. Purdy immediately relaxed and greeted his friends warmly.

Even sign language figured in another case. Two Los Angeles deaf mutes were arrested in Mexico on a reckless driving charge.

Brought before Francisco Dominguez, the chief of Tijuana police, the mutes engaged in animated finger talk.

Said one, "These policemen are dumb. We won't have to pay any money."

"So!" said Dominguez, "cracking jokes on the knuckles, eh? That will cost you fifty dollars. Each."

The chief, it seems, knew the language of mutes.

No one has ever proved scientifically that the crooks get most of the rotten breaks and cops most of the good ones, but even the skeptical police are usually the first to admit. Dame fortune may be fickle, but she tips the balance heavily on the side of law and order.

It is well for us that she does.

Overton K. Boulware

The sun was but an hour high; it was morning in Aggieville. A group of boys and girls were gathered in Room B for a class in English literature. The students who had come from the farms near the Sherman Agricultural, Mechanical and Industrial College had read the autobiography of Booker T. Washington and felt that a course in literature would aid them, as it had aided him, to live an abundant life. They had been so excited with the prospect of beginning this course that they had neglected their usual chores.

One said, "You know, we didn't slop the hogs this morning, and they're gonna break out of the pen and get into the potato patch."

Another said: "That's not so bad. I milked the cows, but I forgot to put them in the pasture, so we won't have much milk tonight."

Still another said: "Well, I left the crib doors open and the chickens and horses are goin' to eat all the corn and we won't have no corn before December."

Besides these students from the neighboring farms, many had come from throughout several states to study agriculture and engineering. While the farm boys talked about the good earth and everything that was in it, the more urban-minded students huddled in a corner and talked about Louis Jordan's latest record: "Let the Good Time Roll, for When You're Dead, Jack, You're Done."

In the midst of this contrapuntal conversation a car drove up and a big, heavy set, well-groomed man got out. We noticed his Clark Gable mustache, his black hair tumbling down over his forehead, his neat dark suit; and his quizzical hazel eyes. In a mellifluous voice he said, "Good morning, Beloveds!" He wrote his name on the blackboard with blue crayon in Old English letters: "OVERTON K. BOULWARE." Then he pulled up a chair, took a seat, and looked the class over. Apparently, he was a professor.

"Beloveds," he said, brushing his black hair and straightening his tie; "we are here this quarter to study English literature. As you know, literature is life, and life is worthy of the Muse."

By this time we were spellbound, we thought Maurice Evans or Laurence Olivier was before us. "How many of you have ever heard of Alexander Pope?" he asked. "A little learning is a dangerous thing. Drink deep, or taste not the pierian spring."

We were not too sure of the meaning of his quotation, but we were flattered that he spoke to us without condescension and with spontaneous friendliness. Next he announced a verse of Burns', "A Bard's Epitaph:"

> Is there a bard of rustic song,
> Who, noteless, steals and crowds among,

That weekly this area throng?
Oh, pass not by!
But with a frater-feeling strong
Here heave a sigh.

Then he said musingly, "I wonder whether any of the farmers know anything about the rustic life of ole Bobby Burns." With no noticeable transition this seemed to lead to a discussion of how corn, peas, potatoes, cotton, cane, and wheat were doing this year.

A student from New York said, "Professor, is this a class in agriculture or English literature?"

"Young man, literature is life," he told the student." And certainly farming is life. It is the backbone of the country. You are here to hear and to study more than the lives of the poets."

Yes, we were to learn more than the lives of the poets. We were to learn from Professor Overton K. Boulware something which modern educators are striving for almost more than anything else – the development of the student into the full man. Part of this was in the appreciation of beauty which he gave us; beauty not only in the descriptions that the poets of the past gave to us, but beauty in the contemporary world – light and joy in a smile, cosmic grandeur in a cloudbank or sunset, and even a comprehension of the dignity and charm which arose from an understanding of rural and urban conditions in the sections where he had worked and lived.

He spoke softly and knew when to make his student respond without using emphasis. Somewhere he had picked up an Oxford accent. Later I learned that he had acted in many Shakespearean plays. And later a good many students imitated his histrionics, and this imitation bore fruit. Student no longer merely mumbled their greetings to one another; no, they accosted their classmates with " 'Hail to thee, Blithe Spirit!' " or " 'What manner of man is this?' "

The buoyancy of his spirit never flagged. Even on bitter, cold mornings when there was snow on the ground and no heat in the classroom. Especially the farm boys who had come a long way expecting some comfort were sadly disappointed, but when Professor Bouldware came in he did not allow himself to be momentarily oppressed by the cheerless room.

"Let's sing," he would say, "and try to be warm and happy. It's been a long time since I remember being happy. Hardly anyone's happy at forty-five unless he is an idiot or a saint."

This made everybody laugh and feel a little warmer even before we began singing Burns' "Flow Gently, Sweet Afton" and "Auld Lang Syne."

But someone would say, "Professor, why don't you let us go home? I'm still cold. The other instructors let us go home when there was no heat."

"That is just why I am not going to let you go," Mr. Boulware said. "You are here to learn something, not to play ring around the roses."

We began reading Samuel Johnson's *Idler*. Questions, ideas, and viewpoint were contributed by each class member. We examined the *Idler* in the manner of a group of ancient Greeks discussing the theories of the soul propounded by Plato and Aristotle. At the close of the hour we had somehow forgotten the cold.

"Beloveds," Professor Boulware said, "You have shown me that you are thinking for yourselves, and that's what you are here for." Such confidence was to make us feel that we had to justify ourselves by giving our best.

He also knew how to arouse our curiosity. He had a way of putting before us parts of a play or story, a literary character or idea, until we were avidly eager for more; then he would cut himself short and say, "I presume you know the rest of the story." When we looked puzzled he would write the title of the book on the blackboard. Then we rushed to get the book under discussion. He believed in wide reading outside of class.

I shall never forget the day we took a trip to Chaucer's Canterbury. Each student had to tell a tale on the way there and on the way back. For the farmers he projected imaginary trips to the wheat fields of Kansas. We took a trip to England during the reigns of Henry the Eighth and Good Queen Bess. After such excursions he would pause and tell the class sonorously, "As Socrates said, 'Even though I know very little of this world, I do know enough not to make claims to knowledge, and this to me seems much better than claiming to know everything.' "

Another of his often-imitated utterances was the statement with which he prefaced his lectures and examinations: "One either knows or he does not know. The only substitute for not knowing is to know. The only remedy is to learn."

Just before Christmas we gathered in his by-now-famous Classroom B for our final meeting. We took our seats, and watched our instructor. He was pacing up and down the front of the room. He did not speak; the only sound was the clunk of his heels against the floor. Intermittently he would look up at us with his customary bantering expression. It was the last time that we would meet as teacher and student in the classroom; but it seemed that he knew and we knew that teacher and student had become part of one another.

He said, "Beloveds, My Beloveds, it has been a pleasure to work with you. Christmas is almost here, bless your little hearts; but I am not playing Santa Claus; you will get what you have made."

We took away more than a mark.

A Flower for Baby

To James Thompson, age 12, fourth grade school proceedings had long ago become routine so that they trailed off into a haze of indistinct impressions. Many a day had seemed long . . . too long to sit indoors, but today seemed never to end.

This morning, a neighbor, whom he called "Aunt Ida," had told him, as she bustled around getting him off to school, that by the time he came home, he would have a new little brother or sister. He did not care much whether the new baby was a girl or a boy, but he did want to get home to see it, and to see, also, if his frail little mother was all right. His mother and this new baby were all the immediate family James had. There had never been a baby in the house, before. This added to his excitement.

Dimly, he heard Mrs. Hall, the teacher, saying, "For home work, read page sixty-nine, children, and be able to answer all the questions, when I ask them, tomorrow."

She then arose quickly from her chair and began to lay neatly folded papers in a slightly worn leather brief case that laid on the top of her desk. That was a signal that in five minutes a bell would announce that school for the day was over and twenty-three fourth-grade pupils would dash out of the old two-story frame structure which was referred to as "our School."

Those last five minutes were reserved for a "straightening up;" a process of actively picking up bits of paper or other trash that always seemed to accumulate during the day. The group did not mind this duty. In fact, they welcomed it with speed and noise, each pupil adding his particular type of din.

But not even the lure of these five minutes of freedom interested James, today. In fact, the delay annoyed him. He wanted desperately to be on his way to see the new baby. So no force less strong than Mrs. Hall and the heavens could prevent his getting home as quickly as possible. Somehow, James felt that the birth of this baby was to be a turning point in his life, like the feeling he had when his father had been killed in a wreck of a large truck that was used to haul groceries to the college.

James had ridden many times in the truck with his father. And if perchance they would pass someone walking on the road, they would always give them a lift. When on the truck, James always beamed with pride for he felt as though the truck were his own possession. It gave him a standing, too, with the boys. Especially the boys who were given rides. One of them had offered James a bite of his apple.

As he sat beside his father in the truck, James would think of the day his legs would be long enough to span with ease the distance from the driver's seat to the brake and clutch. He felt a certain disloyalty when he thought how much faster he would drive than his father generally did.

James' father had been openly proud of his only son. He never failed to boast to all who would listen: "My Jimmie's gonna school and college. I ain't never had the chance. But my son's gonna do something and be somebody." He felt so strongly about this that in his pride, he would never fail to put his hand on James' shoulder and squeeze it hard. Sometimes James could feel pain under that hard pressure, but it was good, like a fusion of strength and love that passed from father to son. It implanted in James' mind, too, the certainty that his glorious future was assured. It was then that James would conjure up his especial dream wherein he was to receive his diploma and his college degree. At that time, his parents would surely be well established in a beautiful house like Mr. Troup's house to which his father had taken James, one time.

But things had not turned out that way. Now, there was no father to come home with a check on the first of every month. All there was was the three hundred dollars insurance money. That was in the bank; all they had to live on, and it would do for a little while. It would probably last until the new baby could crawl. After that, his mother had said she must go out and find a job. That meant there would be no college for James. He would be lucky if he finished grammar school. James avoided thinking about this for the thought of not getting the education his father had promised made James panic.

Today, at recess time, James had run the entire two blocks to "Aunt Lorelei's" house. She was not James' real aunt. Everyone called her "Aunt Lorelei." She made a little money by selling flowers from her own beds. With that and her pension check, she fared quite well. She had such a splendid array of all kinds of garden flowers, she had made quite a reputation for herself. Her flowers seemed to look the freshest, smell the sweetest, and last the longest. Reason enough for James to want one to take home to the new baby.

As James had panted up her walk, she guessed his mission.

"You've come for a flower to take home, haven't you?"

"Yes Ma'am."

Straightway, the old lady had risen from her porch rocker and toddled to the place beside the strong old oak where the biggest, brightest and yellowest chrysanthemums grew. Taking the scissors which she wore attached to a string around her waist, she had asked, "Will one of these be all right?"

"Yes ma'am!" James had said enthusiastically "Yellow is my

favorite color. One of them would fit exactly in a vase on the table beside the baby's crib."

He had shoved his hand importantly into his pants pocket and produced a quarter. He had another nickel, should the flower cost more. He had placed the coin in her hand, half expecting her to ask a higher price for so lovely a flower. But she, looking quite serious, said:

"Let me see, now." She had put her left hand on her forehead as if figuring out something, while her right hand dug deeply into her apron pocket and came out with one dime, one nickel and three pennies. She had dropped the coins into his small palm, saying, "Here's your change, James. Be sure and sprinkle that flower with water if you want to keep it fresh."

"Yes Ma'am. Yes Ma'am. Thank you, Ma'am."

She had turned, smiling, to watch him scoot out of the gate and down the street, holding the flower aloft. . . . as if to declare to the world its beauty by the height he attained holding it aloft.

At school, Mrs. Hall had helped James keep the flower fresh in a vase full of water. Now, it still looked newly-picked; even glistened as the sprinkled drops of water caught stray sunbeams. So, when the bell rang, James ran for the flower and managed to protect it as he was pushed out onto the cement steps by the surging pupils. Some were yelling, some running. Some carried balls, books, jacks or candy. No one noticed James, except Mildred.

At the bottom of the steps Mildred stood watching James intently. She was the little girl with whom he often walked down the tracks although it did take him two blocks out of his way home. They took turns carrying books. But today, James saw no one, not even Mildred. He carried no books; just the flower. And she, not accustomed to such a slight, hid her head in her hands to press back sudden tears. Then she ran down her side of the tracks without a backward glance.

Jimmy, now quite alone, hurried down his side of the tracks. But soon his feet lagged. He had a lot to think about. Especially how he would act when he got home. Should he let go with his usual whoop, or tiptoe in quietly? Should he give the flower to the baby, or to his mother? This change of thought came when he realized how alone and unhappy his mother had seemed without his father. She had cried as she sewed the pink and blue ruffles on the basket which was to be the baby's crib. She had told James that he was going to have to take care of her and the baby and that someday they would all go to meet Daddy. He had only half understood that, but it was comforting to know that some day they would all be together again.

The walk from school was short. James paused at his doorway, fidgeting with his cap. Finally, he entered and was astonished at what he saw.

Aunt Ida was there, but she had been crying. As James entered, a new well of tears gushed forth. She struggled to compose herself, and said, "Thank goodness you came in time, Jimmy. Go in there, now, boy. Your mom wants to see you. Hurry, boy, before it's too late."

As James walked into the bedroom, still carrying his flower, his mother called to him faintly. He stood beside the bed, looking down at her, wonderingly. Her face was as pale as the white sheet that was drawn tightly about her, as if she were cold. The cover heaved up and down. Each breath she took was made with great effort. Her eyes were dimmed, but she did not see the shining yellow flower her son held in his hand.

"You are a good and thoughtful boy, my son," she whispered. "You will love and take care of the baby, I know. You're very much like your father. I won't have to worry. I can go to him . . . now, son . . . I can die in peace. . . ."

Her words trailed off, and James ran from the room, frightened; frightened as he had never been frightened before. Across the room stood the basket and there was a baby in it. Jimmy went to the kitchen and put his precious flower in water, sprinkling some on the flower itself. Next he took it to the table beside the homemade bassinette.

"I bought it for the baby," he explained to the sorrowing neighbor. "I'll go in now and tell my mother where I've put it."

"No," said the neighbor quickly, "let me go in, Jimmy. I'll tell her, if I can. You sit here and watch your little brother."

The futility of confronting the unknown might have pervaded the household had it not been for that one big golden-yellow chrysanthemum that stood staunchly fresh near the baby's crib. It was like a symbol of love and understanding; love untarnished by imperfections; love that was yet to be tested without the inspiration, the guidance and security of a mother. Truly, there could be no better symbol for it than this . . . Jimmy's flower for the baby.

Pot Luck

Cy Harris was getting old and very tired of painting houses. He had been doing it for thirty-one years and he began to wonder if he would ever get a raise. His wife, Vera, wondered about that, too. Except that she did her wondering aloud and vehemently. Nag, nag, nag, until he was sick of her, too. To spur him on and make life endurable, every morning as he walked to work, he said to himself, "Maybe today will be different?" But it never was. Nor had he ever dared talk back to Vera.

This morning, early dew still lay on the grass as he went up the hill to his boss' house. The boss used his barn as a place of business so Cy went there and sat on an old nail keg, sucking on a wilted, hand-rolled cigarette, awaiting his assignment for the day's work.

A door banged. "Here he comes, now," Cy said to himself. "Look at him! Why he's painted so long he looks like a pothook. Wonder what the old walrus will have to say this morning?"

"The old walrus," with his gay-ninety mustache which he had never shaved off, and which was now grey and tobacco stained, came in beaming.

"Nice mornin, Cy. Ain't it beautiful?"

"Ain't what beautiful? I ain't seen anything beautiful in years. And I ain't done nothin' exciting since long before that. Where we paintin' today?"

"Gonna do Sibalski's house."

"Sibalski's? That's the rich dame that lives a block from my place, ain't it?"

"Right. And it's a good job, Cy. She pays well. You gotta do your best job for her, understand? And no loafin' on the job. She wants it done in a hurry."

"Everybody wants their job done in a hurry," Cy grumbled. "But a man can't work at top speed all the time."

"You're goin' to on this job, Cy. Back the truck out, will ya?"

Cy moved slowly over to the pick-up truck and got into it. He shoved the starter and the old machine roared at him. He clashed the gears, shot backward and halted about two inches from the house.

"Shoulda gone right through with the darn thing," he muttered to himself. "Then the boss woulda had to buy a new truck. Been drivin' this one for over fifteen years."

The boss got in and off they chugged.

"I put everything you'll need in the truck before you came, Cy," the boss informed. "Want to save all the time I can on this job."

It was only a short drive to Sibalski's house. It stood out in the morning sun; a fairly large house and very pleasing to the eye. Cy drove up the short straight driveway and halted before the garage doors.

"Where's Mrs. Sibalski?" Cy asked. "All the shades are down."

"She's gone on a two week's vacation."

"That's great! At least she won't be peekin' through the windows at me or criticizing the way I work," Cy thought.

They pulled the ladders off the truck and took out some paint and gave it an additional stirring. Cy eyed the brush he held in his hand.

"Boss," Cy said, "when am I goin' to get a new brush? This thing handles like a rake. I'm sick o' tryin' to make it do a good job."

"Seems like you're sick of a lot o' things, Cy. Just look out to see I don't get sick of you and your continual beefing."

"Well, you'd be sick o' things, too, Boss, if you led the humdrum, nag-filled life I lead. At home, I can't call my soul my own. Haven't had any excitement since I can remember."

"You an' me, bein' way over fifty, got no call to expect excitement," the boss said thoughtfully. "So, what's the good of complainin'. An' I got a wife I'd like to get even with, too."

"Maybe *you're* too old," said Cy, half under his breath, "but I ain't." Then louder, "Which side are we doin' first?"

"The one over the sun porch."

Cy set his ladder against the house and climbed up onto the sun porch's roof. "Not bad," he told himself. "Can't nobody see me up here. Maybe this ain't such a bad job after all."

"Cy!" the boss hollered.

"Yeah?"

"What the devil are you doin' up on the roof?"

"Testin' it, Boss, jest testin' it."

"Well, come down here and get some paint, and test the brush, too."

Cy flipped away the butt of his soggy cigarette and swung out onto the ladder. His overalls hooked on a nail and he hung there, cursing.

"What's keepin' you?" the boss wanted to know.

"I can't move. . . . Got my pants caught. . . . "

"Well, for cripes sake! Get loose and come down here."

A moment later, Cy alighted, saying, "I didn't see the nail. Darned if I could figure what happened. For a moment, I thought I was paralyzed. Where you gonna work?"

"I gotta leave you alone, today, Cy. Got another job to start. But I want you to remember this dame's got dough and wants things done right. I'll be back with the truck in time to run you home." The boss got into the truck and started the motor. He had already set out all the paint Cy would need.

Cy waved at the departing boss, then scooped up a can of goop and lumbered slowly up the ladder. He reached the top and stepped onto the porch roof. The sun was really hot. He sat the paint down with a sigh of relief, he slid into a sitting position beside the big can. As he scraped at his crusty overalls, he murmured, "Not so bad," and as a breeze struck his seamed face, he repeated, "Not so bad. Not bad at all!"

Cy rolled himself another cigarette and lit it. The minutes ticked by. His cigarette shortened. Finally, with a half-hearted sigh, he took one last drag and flipped away the butt. Then he stood up.

"Gotta git goin,' I suppose," he mumbled.

He dipped the frayed brush into the paint and began the endless motions. Back and forth, dip, back and forth, dip, the same old monotonous routine he endured every working day.

As the sun rose, the roof got hotter and hotter. Cy's strokes became slower and slower. His face dripped sweat and his pasty complexion turned a salmon pink. It was not a pretty face, but the kind one gets attached to after it's been around awhile. With a grunt, he completed the stroke that ended at a window and dropped lifelessly into a sitting position. As soon as the part over the porch roof was completed he would have to paint from the ladder. Might as well take advantage of the comfort of the roof as long as possible, he figured.

His eyes caught sight of a fly milling around on his pants leg. "Look at the bugger," he murmured testily. "All he does is circle around and give himself a scratch now and then. No work, nothin'! Just flies and has for himself a good time. Why couldn't I have been a fly? Wonder what time it is? Must be noon. Suppose Vera put the damn pickle in my lunch again. Every day I open the bag and there's a dill staring me in the face. She knows I don't like pickles! Ye gads, what a woman! 'Cy do this, Cy do that!' is all I get at home. Just once, I'd like to tell her what to do and especially where to go. . . "

Cy struggled to his feet and resumed painting. The brush slid slowly over the side of the house. Then his brush smacked another window sill. He looked inside for a moment. "Wonder if it's locked?" he mused. There was only one way to find out.

He reached into his overall pocket and brought forth a screwdriver. Placing it between the sill and casing, he gave a hard upward

thrust. The window shot up with wonderful ease. A waft of cool, fragrant air hit Cy full in the face.

"Ye gads!" he exclaimed, "It's cool in there! Wonder if I could just slip inside and eat my lunch? No . . . Better not . . . Then again, who'd see me? Heck, I wouldn't hurt nothin'. An' the old gal won't be home for two weeks. I'd only be in there for lunch."

Having convinced himself that there would be no harm trying, he made for the ladder and climbed down to get his lunch bag. Then he shot up the ladder with surprising agility. The window was open wide, so he climbed in with equal agility. Life was taking on an unexpected interest.

"Jeez, what a layout!" he breathed.

His bulging eyes roamed over the Persian rug; a dainty dressing table, complete with perfume, powder and all sorts of feminine magic-makers. Finally, he saw the nicest object in his entire life. It was a chaise lounge, just waiting for someone to stretch out on it. He made a clumsy pirouette and landed fully upon the lounge, breathing a deep sigh of real contentment. Then he took out his sandwich and munched absently.

"Wonder what the rest of the place looks like?" he mused. "Couldn't hurt nothin' to take a look."

Five minutes later, Cy was wondering through the downstairs dining room when his eye caught an exquisite little walnut cabinet. "Wonder what the old gal keeps in that two-door chest?" he asked himself. To answer, he pulled upon one of the doors and saw, neatly stacked in the cabinet, several quart-sized bottles containing amber colored fluids. Taking stock of all this, he noted that one bottle was full of clear white liquid that looked like water, and Cy was very thirsty.

"Now, if I sampled that," he told himself, "I could fill it up with water and it would be just the same. But pshaw, I couldn't do that! All I can do is see how it tastes."

The cap came off easily. Cy took a long swig, then another. It did taste good and made him feel fine. But after he had downed several polywogs, his good sense told him he must return to the bedroom and get back on the job. He could not afford to be fired. . . . Not at his age.

In the bedroom, however, the comfort of that chaise lounge was just too much for him. He stretched himself out and flung his arms carelessly. One hand rapped hard on the dressing table.

"Ouch!" he yipped and sat straight, staring at the table.

He saw an odd-shaped bottle with a rubber ball on top of it. Curiously, he grasped it and gave the ball a good squeeze. An aroma

of lilies-of-the-valley shot smack into Cy's nose and buried itself in his whiskers. Surprised, but not displeased, he gave the ball a few more squeezes before replacing it on the dressing table. Somehow, he was feeling more like a new man, a brave and daring man, a regular "heller."

"But," he muttered, "I suppose I'd best get back on that damn roof. Be just like the old walrus to come sneakin' back to make sure I was workin' hard."

Cy was half out of the window then a thought struck him. "I better go down and check the dining room to see if I left any marks anywhere. I might have left one of the cabinet's doors open . . ."

Five minutes later, he emerged from the window and looked dolefully at the can of paint. Then he looked up at the sun. "Headin' for the west," he thought happily. "The day's most over and it hasn't been a bad one, at all. Best I've had in many a year."

He picked up his brush and began the seemingly endless task once more. Back and forth went his arm, automatically. All the time he was working he was wishing he were back inside the bedroom, taking it easy on that lounge. Sweat poured off of him. His breathing became heavy. His soaking wet underwear was beginning the everlasting upward climb that oppresses all mankind. Finally, he said:

"Geez! I can't stand this!"

He looked around for a moment. There was no one in sight. Even the street was empty of traffic. Swiftly he went to the window, threw it open and climbed inside, murmuring, "You sweet, beautiful, cool room!"

He eased himself onto the chaise lounge, after making a grab for the perfume bottle. He looked at it and said aloud, "Wouldn't Vera spit sparks if I came home all stunk up? She'd really give me hell! But she'd do that anyway. She don't have to have any excuse at all to jump on me with both her big feet. So, what have I got to lose?"

Cy leaped up and headed for the dining room. He slid on the rug in front of the cabinet, but stopped himself safely. Then he took out the quart of gin and sank the gin-line by about two inches.

"Man, if that don't taste like catnip to a cat, then I'm a horse's rump!" he enthused, smacking his lips.

Cy was in the dining room quite a long time. When he struggled through the window again, he was indeed a different man. He saw a woman walking on the sidewalk at the edge of the Sibalski's property. Even though she was not young, he hooted at her:

"Hey you! Want to come up and keep a guy company?"

She did not answer. She gave him an indignant look and hurried away.

"Unsociable old fool," he muttered. "She ought to be glad to have a man notice her."

He picked up the paint brush and made a few wobbly strokes. "It'd be a lot easier," he grumbled, "if this house would hold still." Then he dropped the brush in disgust and let it lie there on the roof.

He fumbled for a cigarette, spilling half the tobacco before he got the cigarette to his mouth. What was left was just good for a deep draw.

"Tastes mighty good," he said, eyeing the window. "What's to stop me from going in there again?" he asked himself, then answered, "Not one blame thing!"

Inside, he stopped first at the dressing table. Taking the atomizer he gave himself a few squirts in accepted places, behind the ears, on his scrawny chest, and a couple under his arm-pits.

"Bet I smell like one of them French women I read about. And since I smell so sexy, I'm ready for the dining room again."

This time, Cy sat for a full five minutes, taking little sips to make the bottle last longer. He had never enjoyed himself more in his life until he heard a far-away voice that shook his brogans. It was unmistakably the voice of Vera, his wife!

"Cy? Where are you? Answer me, this minute!"

For a moment, Cy shook violently, then regained composure. He capped the almost empty bottle, being careful to replace it in its original position, thinking the while, "What in hell does she want? Who does she think she is, going around hollering at me while I'm working? She never did that before."

He headed upstairs, growling, "I'll show that woman! She's pushed me around once too often. I'm not scared of her any more . . . . Not one bit scared!"

Although unsteadily, he got through the window and out onto the roof. From there, he could look down onto the driveway. Vera was there with another woman. He grabbed the ladder and gave it a tug, almost pulling himself over the edge of the roof. He strained and pulled until he had the whole contraption up on the roof with him. Then he laid down near the roof's edge where he could not be seen by the women below who had not yet spotted him on the roof.

"Cy!" his wife howled. "Where are you? Answer me this minute!"

Cy thought for a moment, rolled over onto his stomach and

placing his head in his hands looked down at them with a grin on his face.

"Hello," he said, tantalizingly.

"Cy, what's wrong with you?"

"Not a dang thing," his grin became wider. "Why?"

"The boss's wife called me to say that you hollered something dirty and insulting at her neighbor when she walked by here a few hours ago. Isn't that right?" she asked the beefy woman who stood beside her.

Before the woman could answer, a voice came from the roof.

"Now, ain't that awful? I was just trying to be nice to her. If I insulted her, why didn't she have me arrested?"

"We'll go for the police," said the boss's wife, "if what she said is true."

"Then goodbye," he called, and rolled over onto his back.

He began singing a few dirty dities, in a loud voice. . . .

"Cy! That's enough!" his wife warned. "Come down here this minute."

Cy rolled over onto his stomach and looked down, saying, "Vera darling . . ."

"Well?"

"Here's a dollar bill," he tossed one into the air. "You take it."

"For what?"

"Go down to the store on Main Street and buy two lemons. Then you both go suck on them, and leave me alone."

Cy rolled back and began to laugh so loudly he could not hear the ranting and raging that went on below. His foot hit something and he raised his head to try and focus his eyes on the object. It was the dear old paint can, still half full. He grasped it firmly by the hook and bottom, promising himself, "Next time they holler will be the last time. I told 'em to go away. . . ."

"CYRUS!" his wife yowled.

He stood up, the can poised. Then he heard the familiar chugging of the boss's truck. But it was too late now. The paint cascaded down onto the two figures below. Cy sat back, then laid down and quite suddenly passed out.

* * *

Cy did not really come to until he found himself in his own bedroom with the boss helping the removal of Cy's clothes. The two women were in the kitchen talking like magpies and removing paint.

"What in blazes made you do it?" the boss wanted to know.

"I dunno, boss. Guess I lost my head. And since I threw paint on your wife, I guess you won't want me any more, huh?"

"I shouldn't say this . . . and don't you dare repeat it . . . but I'll be dang-busted if I didn't about split a gut when I saw you drop that paint. Wish to God I coulda done it myself. You know that wife of mine ain't no lily to live with. She had something like that comin' to her, and I was glad I was there to see it. I've often warned her never to come nosin' around where I'm supposed to be working. No, sir, I ain't firin' you for what you did to her, I sure ain't. . . ."

"But there's more to it, boss. I just had the time of my life! I'm a new man!" Then Cy told all that had happened, expecting any moment to be fired for what he had done. But instead, the boss said:

"Don't worry about the bottle, Cy. We'll get a new one and put it back. If there's any left, we'll split it, huh?

"Cyrus!" came from the kitchen, "Don't you say one word about what happened until I can get in there and hear it!" Then Vera's bulk all but filled the bedroom doorway. "I want to know how you got to smellin' like a lily . . .?"

"You git back to the kitchen!" Cy ordered in a new voice and manner. "Now git!"

And she went!

The Significance of Christmas

Our Lord's birthday has become a child's paradise. Of course, the little one's immaturity makes it impossible for him or her to share this transcendent happiness with the Savior. Instead, childhood focuses all its interest on a fat little elf decked out in red, a genial old soul with ruddy cheeks, long white whiskers and a hearty laugh.

For older children – you and me – Christmas has great significance. It is a season of friendship; a season of merry-making; and most of all a season of thanksgiving to the One who has blessed us with His love.

We show our gratitude in unique ways. Wreaths of holly, colored candles, and brightly tinted tinsel adorn our windows. Almost every house has its Christmas tree. Our homes are open to our friends and neighbors. All are welcome, and we would not even think of turning away the derelict who asks for a dime to buy a cup of coffee.

He asks us for only a dime and we give him a quarter. Or he asks for a quarter and we give him twice the amount he requests. Perhaps, next week we will not be so generous, but this is the Christmas season.

At this season we will drop a dollar bill into the pot which Santa Claus guards on so many street corners and walk away with a self-satisfied feeling of generosity. When we donate to a charitable cause, we are apt to feel a sense of self-righteousness. We feel big-hearted when we subscribe to the building fund for our church.

The reason we get these sensations of well-being is because we fail to recognize the origin of our impulses. The greatest gift that was ever made was God's ineffable gift to the world. Each time we perform an act of generosity, we should remember that it is but a reflection of God's munificence. We, ourselves, deserve not the slightest credit, for we are only giving to God what is already His.

Leave Christ out of Christmas and there is nothing left. We may listen to *Silent Night, White Christmas,* and the lovely Christmas carols and enjoy them immensely – but the listener who does not have Christ in his heart may enjoy the soap advertisements equally as much. His pleasure is woefully superficial compared to the person who is constantly aware of the nearness of God's spirit.

The manufacturers of Christmas cards are in business to make money just like the rest of us. Nevertheless, they have assumed an overwhelming responsibility because they are involved in what should be recognized as a sacred occupation. Surely, there is nothing very

inspiring about opening an envelope on Christmas Eve and seeing the traditional "Season's Greetings" inscribed above a picture of two dogs yapping at each other.

Let's reinstate Christ in our lives. Let's capture the real spirit of Christmas. When we buy a Christmas card, it would be wise to examine it carefully and see if it expresses the true meaning of God's love. When we say Merry Christmas to a friend, let us say it with a joy which is intensified by an appreciation of its meaning. And when we take him to the door and wish him a Merry Christmas and bid him good-by, let us always remember not to be in a hurry, for "good-bye" really means, "God be with you."

Hometown

I have not lived anywhere long enough to have a home town. My family didn't travel with Ringling Brothers, nor did they belong to a gypsy tribe, but they loved animals. So they traveled hither and yon representing the Boston National Humane Society.

I was tired of lectures, and knew that my vocation could not be humane work; so I ran across an advertisement in the Afro-American newspaper of a college in the Tar Heel State – "If you want an education come to Rockall, North Carolina." It had a humane touch, too: "We are standing by the road where the races of men go by." So I made the necessary arrangements and left Kansas for Rockall.

As I passed through Missouri, Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia and South Carolina, I thought seriously of my future. I asked myself whether I wanted to be a business man, social worker, singer, dramatist, teacher or writer. The last night aboard the train, I had such pleasant dreams about this wealth of future opportunities that I almost passed my home-town-to-be.

At five a. m. the redcap put me off at Rockall. "You are now in the cultural center of the south, boy," he told me. "Our people have six colleges here."

My morale increased one hundred per cent. I must have made a wonderful selection. Approaching Union Station, I saw signs that made me wonder what "culture" meant. Race? Color? Creed? Perhaps it meant "separate but equal." But it could not mean that, I thought, because those seats in that dark room marked "colored" were so different – so dingy looking. There was no Travelers' Aid, no Red Cross, nothing but a ticket agent. I stepped to the window.

"What you want?" the agent mumbled.

"I want to get a taxicab to go to The Dungee State College," I replied.

"You go across the railroad track," the agent told me, "and you will find taxis for your kind. They will tell you where the boys live and more too."

Somehow I got on the right road and hitched a ride with a junk dealer. I expected that the old truck would break down momentarily, but it managed to get me to my destination, and where I was going to live. This was an old building remodeled from what had originally been a hospital during the last war. The school had rented it for class rooms and a men's dormitory. When I located the section of the ward where I was to spend the next one or two years, I found I had arrived before the other students. Not feeling sleepy I decided to take in a movie.

The junk dealer had said I should go down East Broad Street

to reach Oak Street, the center of town, where everything could be found in the line of food, clothing, recreation. I passed a drug store with a small black sign on the side of the door reading, "The Master of Short Stories worked here." A block farther on I came to a three-story hotel that had a red and white sign: "Bagdad Hotel." Later I learned that the great author was born in Rockall, but at the moment I was interested in theatrical rather than literary research. A flashing neon sign on the other side of the street said "Stormy Weather" was playing at that theatre, the Southern.

"You can't buy a ticket here," the ticket seller told me.

"Why can't I buy a ticket?" I asked her. "I have enough money."

"We just don't sell tickets to you," she tartly replied. "If the picture ever comes to the Roxy Theatre, you can see it. Get the idea?"

Some windows were broken in the Roxy, papers covered the street in front, and the smell of popcorn was strong. I entered and saw "Imitation of Life." The picture showed what happened to Negroes who pass as white and fear reality. I was up against another kind of reality when I left the theatre, for I was hungry and couldn't find a place to eat. I had to go back to the dormitory and, that night, didn't get a chance to see what my home town was like.

Actually I didn't get a chance to see my home town during the whole two years of my stay. I knew the Great Smoky Mountains were near, also an opera house; some gardens built by slaves; golf courses; parks; lakes; skating rinks and swimming pools, but they were not open to colored folks. So I have visited those places only in my mind.

The one place in Rockall I did see was the Dungee State College, and the conditions that made me almost despair of my dreams for the future. Because of the low pay prevalent in Southern Negro Colleges, most of my instructors had a pessimistic attitude which affected their work with the students. I was presented with a vivid example of this shortly before I left the South for a New York College, where I ran into the instructor who had taught me communication skills in Rockall. I told him of my plans for graduate work.

He said, "I'm glad you are continuing your education, but I'm sorry you were in the Communication Skills classes I neglected. Pay is so low in these colored colleges. I had to catch up with my chess, and the classes were too large to try to teach. Too bad you had to be among those kinds."

Well, such is my home town. I call it that because one feels closest to that thing, person or condition that has made one suffer most. Yes, Rockall is my home town, all right. It hit me where I lived.

What Music Means to Me

To me music is a mystery. I have very little knowledge of the whys, hows and wherefores of the art. As long as I can remember, I have heard music, piano, band, choir, solos and other types. Some in my opinion have been good; some fair, and some poor. The only criteria I have for determining the quality of music is whether or not it is pleasant to the ear.

For the mysterious part of music, I have observed many times, that one seems to become affected by the strains, so that he becomes, as they say in the vernacular, hep cats.

Some have become so affected that they literally dance out of their clothes when jitterbugging. Others reach such a fervor in religious music that they seem to become "real gone guys and gals." Then, some seem to grimace and be played upon as if they were an instrument, when affected by classics. I fail to see how music, as a combination of sounds, can grip a person in its throes and pitch and toss him, elevate and depress, cause sadness, happiness, dreams, hopes, and in general cause people to act so much like something they "ain't." How can it cause people to act like kings, and others to act like oafs.

Yes, music to me is a mystery.

The Hill Was Beautiful

The sun was high; all was quiet. I stood on the summit of the hill, took off my helmet and ran a sleeve across my forehead. It was hot. I put the helmet back on, shifted the position of my pistol, then glanced around and saw how the trail twisted in its tortured journey down the hill.

The lieutenant looked up at the stars through what had been the roof of the shelled farmhouse. There was no moon. "At least we'll have a good night for it," he said.

The men, squatting, some propped against the wall, others lying on the floor, were silent. This would be their first patrol, and perhaps their last.

"We move out in two hours. Any questions?" the lieutenant went on.

Each man grimaced at his neighbor. One cleared his throat, another shifted position.

At 2300 hours twenty-one men moved silently out onto the flat, and in a staggered column were swallowed up in darkness.

The sun was high. I took a few steps down the hill, then stopped. For the first time I became aware of the beauty surrounding me. I gazed in wonder at the symmetry of the terraces which, like the steps from the dais of some mighty potentate, were covered with a carpet of green velvet. I slowly turned, and the trees of the orchard spread like a fan in their descent, terrace upon terrace, down to the flat.

The lieutenant crouched at the foot of the hill, squinted into the inky darkness. "Hell's kitchen for sure," he murmured. Then he turned, said, "Pass word back to close up the interval between the men, and to stay off the terraces; they're saturated with mines, and trip flares. This is an order. And have that man with the bazooka move up to me. We're going in." The trail was probably mined too, but there was no other way up.

"Ready, Sergeant?" the lieutenant asked.

"Ready, sir."

"Scouts out," the lieutenant whispered. And into the valley of death, I'm sure he was thinking.

The general was eating breakfast as his G-3 entered and sat beside him.

"That C-R patrol from Dinah-White-Able-Two has been out for more than forty-eight hours, sir," the G-3 said. "The adjacent com-

pany reported heavy mortar and machine gun fire in that sector from 0100 hours to 0130 hours yesterday. Looks like we've lost them."

The general swallowed, sipped his coffee, said, "Looks like the enemy is still on the hill. Well, that's what we wanted to know."

A gentle breeze moved the leaves of the trees. I was alone and enchanted. I looked at a sky I had never seen so blue. Off to the west I could make out the waves of the Tyrhennian Sea, falling as though exhausted on the white sands of the beach. One could not help acknowledging the handiwork of some mighty power, for who else could create things of such beauty.

It was a peaceful Hill "X"; Nature was at rest, and I was lost in contemplation of things which no man has explained.

"Hey, Captain!" The shout startled me.

"What is it, corporal?" I queried.

"We've just found Adams, sir."

To reality I turned from the green of the grass, the sighing of the trees, the symmetric terraces, and suddenly it was hot. I took off my helmet and sent my right sleeve across my forehead. I put the helmet back on, shifted position of my pistol and gazed solemnly about me.

"That makes twenty-two, doesn't it, corporal?"

"Yes, sir, that's all of them," he replied. "This sure is a pretty hill, Captain," he added.

My gaze wandered to the trail that twisted and turned in its tortured journey to the foot of the hill. I could go down now.

On the Edge

My professor had told me to get a slant on the opening, September 30, 1949, of the new John Hancock Mutual Life Insurance Company's new building. I was nervous about it. The idea of a slant confused me; my emotions bewildered me.

In the first place it was an edgy experience, for a Negro just up from the south, to attend a non-segregated gathering. I entered the John Hancock building not sure whether I would be thrown out or in some way embarrassed. I did not see any other colored people there. Was my professor sure I could be admitted to see this building? Why did he make this a must? I told myself I'd never be able to write this assignment. I tried to lag back, but the crowd pushed me along until I found myself in the auditorium.

A big man in a blue suit said, "Sit down front," but did he mean me? I remember too well the time when I was in the navy in Low, South Carolina, at another auditorium opening. That was at the Franklin Base, The Naval Receiving Station. I had tried to go down front there, because I had misunderstood the Navy guide. I could never forget the way he grabbed my arm and told me to get out. Here, in Boston, the memory of that South Carolina experience made me feel shaky, doubtful.

I felt even more nervous when I was directed to sit by a pleasant-looking white woman. She tried to talk; I opened my mouth but nothing came out. She smiled; then I was truly upset, for I was not used to such friendliness.

By contrast it made me remember how I was greeted when I reported to the personnel office in the Allerton Receiving Station after boot training. A big sailor yelled, addressed me as "Sambo," and told me to come in the back door. When I presented myself there he opened my orders and said, "You are a YEOMAN? This is a rotten mistake, boy. Colored here cook, shine shoes, make beds, wait table, and wait on the officers. G'on over to the "spooks'" barracks and wait for further orders!"

I saw more Jim Crow treatment when I went to the supper hall. There were two lines, one white sailors, the other colored. Inside we got our meals in the same line, but they had a section of the dining hall blocked off for "colored only." They had fewer windows in this section, too. I asked one of my companions why we didn't eat out there.

He said, "Cause you is black, low and dirty; 'cause you might not act right out there. So you were sent back here for your own good. Get the idea?"

It gave me a strange feeling to remember those things now, through the white woman's smile. It made me remember something else – an article I had read in *Ebony* Magazine: A poll of Negro opinion throughout the country indicated that Boston had the best living conditions for Negroes of any city in the United States.

My mind was clearing now. I was confident that I could fulfill my assignment. The breath of freedom and equality here was so refreshing that I felt Boston was building something a lot bigger than the John Hancock Insurance Building.

Why?

Has the once highly regarded form of fiction, known as the ghost story, fallen from grace with American readers and publishers?

Edgar Allen Poe, termed by many the greatest literary genius of America, rested his reputation on his ability as a literary critic. He was the first to place such criticism on a rational level, his continual mastery of the mystery or detective story. Today, an annual convention of detective story writers gives its version of the Hollywood Oscar to the outstanding writer among them. They call it the "Edgar" in commemoration of Poe's ability to compile and write artistically the type of tale known as the ghost story. Poe's mystery stories are far more well known than his poetry.

Quite a few other well-known writers of the past devoted their energies to stories based upon the supernatural and mysterious. Honore de Balzac, Guy de Maupassant, Nathaniel Hawthorne, O'Henry, Rudyard Kipling, and even Charles Dickens, all wrote ghost stories of their respective types which were widely read, in their time, and even today. But as for the actual invention of the ghost story, it is impossible to accredit it to any one person or nation. The ghost story is as old as man. Tales of the supernatural were told and handed down by word-of-mouth long before reading, writing and printing were available. Actually, any wierd or unexplainable event, is a mystery story, and the supernatural mystery becomes a ghost story.

During literature's Elizabethan era, Shakespeare created many psychologically sound spectres for most of his tragedies. But it remained for writers of the 18th century to actually develop the art of writing stories entirely based upon the mysterious. The good tale of this sort is made up of four basic elements; atmosphere, suspense, plot and a well constructed horror. For instance, Ann Radcliffe's "Mysteries of Udolpho," gave birth to the technique of suggestive narrative suspense, rather than the objective. This gave the imagination greater food.

By the 19th century, the ghost story had arrived. Most of the great masters of the supernatural narrative, wrote in the latter half of this one hundred years. Coleridge produced his "Ancient Mariner," a ghost story in verse. Mr. Shelly wrote the unforgettable, "Frankenstein," and Poe did his best work. Poe's English counterpart was Josephy Sheridan LeFanu. Hence, the years from 1898 to 1911 constituted the golden age of the ghost story.

At the end of this period, tales of the supernatural seemed to suddenly disappear. Why, is hard to say. Public demand for that

type of literature was as strong as ever, but good ghost stories just stopped appearing in print. The only possible explanation seems to be that the better type of writers seemed to consider that sensational type of writing below them, just as some people consider writing for the modern pulp magazines, below the standards of good writing. But the public is just as eager as ever to experience the "*frission d'horreur,*" as they ever were, so there is a crying need for a resumption of good ghost stories, and for editors to recognize that fact.

In a nightmare, the "*frission d'horreur,*" is the brief spell after awakening; a physical effect recognized by all who have ever had nightmares. Upon awakening, there is only relief, but there is a remembrance of the feeling of fear and horror in the dream which had seemed so real and so terrifying. The *frission d'horreur* lasts as long as does that memory.

The ghost story is a close relation to the nightmare. If it is written as grippingly as it should be, the reader will experience a definite physical reaction, just as if he had awakened from a nightmare. The short hairs at the nape of his neck will rise, and a shudder will jar his spine, like the stroke of icy fingers. Horrible as it may sound, this bodily revulsion on the part of the reader is the reason for his reading the ghost story. It will chill him, but it will thrill as well.

And where Poe and all the other writers of classical ghost stories had access to the best and most respected markets, today, about the only market for the ghost story is the pulp horror magazine, usually not considered a "quality magazine," nor containing so-called quality writing. Therefore, the quality writer, if he writes a horror story, will have to send it to one of the pulp markets, usually under a pen name. This shows that the ghost story is merely surviving. No form of literature can be successful when it is shunned by reputable publishers, or restricted to certain types of readers. For this reason, a poor imitation of the successful ghost tale is reaching the public, just because there is no commercial outlet which will print the ghost story, other than a few of the pulp magazines.

Because of this condition, the one really good exponent of supernatural writing, since the first World War, H. P. Lovecraft, an American, wrote countless horror stories and had them widely circulated in the pulp magazines printed by Arkham House. This publishing concern adopted its name from a mythical city created as a setting in one of Lovecraft's tales.

Lovecraft, born in Providence, Rhode Island, just before the turn of the century, became steeped in the lore of New England. As a result, most of his stories are set in small towns in that region

where society is decadent and the people innately superstitious. The inventive Lovecraft created an entirely new mythology as a basis for the majority of his works. After his death, 1939, Arkham House collected Lovecraft's works in one volume which sold many copies. He is now recognized as a true exponent of the ghost story. No anthology of mystery stories is complete without one or more of Lovecraft's tales. "The Dunwich Horror," was done on radio, starring Ronald Coleman.

But today, the printing, the dramatization, and the markets for the ghost story seem to have fallen from grace, for many years. In our country, where the literary output is so great, we have only produced one good supernatural writer in three decades. But since the public is crying for others, maybe things will be looking up, especially on television, where viewers are crying to see something new, instead of the old, old, late movies, which are shown over and over again.

There is, of course, a pulp outlet for pseudo-scientific mysteries, such as "Doomsday Deferred," by Will F. Jenkins. In that story of attacking soldier ants, Mr. Jenkins employed all the technique of the ghost story save only the actual supernatural. This was a good horror story that found its way to a reputable market. Several other ghost stories have met with success in the movies, from *Frankenstein* to the *Wolfman*, but no new ones by new writers have been seen.

It is not easy to write a good ghost story, or mystery story, and make it convincing to the reader. If every point is not logically thought out and explained in the ending, it is an unacceptable story. If the reader is allowed to guess the ending before reading it, it is a poor story. No other type of story requires such concentrated thought and careful planning, which must all come from the creative genius of the writer. It takes a peculiar mixture of imagination, research, background knowledge, and a keen study of human nature, plus an excellent plot, to write a successful mystery story. Therefore, it is the opinion of this writer that publishers should encourage good writers to submit mystery stories and meet the public's demand for them. All the ghost story needs, to rise to its former heights, is to get it out of the pulps and into the quality magazines. Then the horror tale will be recognized for what it is; a real high type of literature, deserving a place in the best markets of the world.

What America Means to Me

To me, America means an opportunity to own a home, automobile, radio, electric icebox and other things that contribute to easy and pleasant living. It means an opportunity to attend the church and school of my choice, the privilege of wearing yellow knitted socks and scarlet, handpainted ties, should I want to wear them; peanuts, chewing gum, double features, potato chips, and banana splits, when I want them.

America affords me the best economic opportunity. Even though there is a dual order, with white and colored peoples going their own, but separate ways, there is more of a chance, if one has the ability and initiative, to get somewhere than in many foreign countries, not restricted by race, creed or color. The average income of the American Negro is much higher than that of the average European, white or black. No one can deny that the ability to earn a decent living, provided here in America, is not one of the most important things in life.

Then, too, recreational advantages are more varied, more accessible, and for the most part free, here in America. Anyone, black or white, who has the ability to participate in sports is eligible, either as an amateur or a professional. If one wants to travel, our snow-capped Mt. Everest, in the State of Washington, will match the Alps of Switzerland in scenery and skiing. Our own Mississippi River is far more grand, and surely more safe to travel than the Ganges or the Nile. We have public reservations and parks at our command. We have everything within our borders that a traveler could wish to see. And we should see what we have here before traveling abroad to be able to make comparisons, to say nothing of the advantage of being able to answer questions fired at us from foreigners, about our country.

While it is true, in some instances, jobs are not given on the basis of merit, but on the basis of color, there is this to consider: Here, in this great America, we are not deprived of the opportunity to organize our forces and resources to combat unfairness or evils. Compare the treatment of English subjects in Africa, the French Colonies, Belgium, the East Indies, even in Palestine.

So, briefly, to me, America means unlimited opportunity; the chance of attaining the highest goal for which I am qualified. It means an opportunity to enjoy life, to buy what I want, and to pack up my bag and walk out, whenever I am dissatisfied. That, in summary, is just about everything that is good, and very, very few things that are bad. And even those few bad things are being remedied, so America really means everything fine to me.

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